

Beware of Chickens & Turtles!

Selling Change, a new book that proposes the key to selling in a globalized, commoditized, Internet-focused marketplace is for sales people to create value for the client through change. “If you can get your customers to see changes that need to be made in their businesses then you can lead the change process and provide customized solutions,” says author Brett Clay.

In his book, he identifies six common ways that people adapt to the forces of change. The savvy salesperson needs to know how to identify each personality type and to recognize how to handle each one.

1. The Chicken

The Chicken is one of the two neurotic change types. This person is not able to adapt successfully to any situation and simply keeps changing. This person appears to go randomly from change to change, oblivious to any risk, and he does not make significant progress on any change attempted. As a salesperson and change leader, your resources will be depleted before you are able to help the chicken complete a change. Therefore, you should quickly disengage from customers who display the characteristics of the chicken profile.

2. The Chameleon

The Chameleon is an ‘early adopter’ of changes. She has high confidence and is comfortable being alone ahead of the herd. She does not have strong anxieties, but instead is naturally comfortable with change. She enjoys exploration and discovery, and for her, change seems to come quickly and effortlessly. If you find a Chameleon, follow her – she has already found the path!

3. The Canadian Geese

For the Geese, change has always been part of their lives. In fact, their lives in the flock depend on change. Because of the magnitude of changes they undertake and the size of their organization that must implement the changes, they arguably have the most action. Realize that Geese require significant planning and validation before they take actions that affect the entire organization. Eighty percent of their efforts may be used in planning, with execution consuming just 20%. Try to structure your engagement such that you are not providing free consulting during the planning. Remember, Geese consider planning to be 80% of the value.

4. The Beaver

The Beaver is the most stable of all the change types. The Beaver stays close to home, i.e. the current situation, and makes small incremental changes. He perceives that large-scale change brings large-scale risk, which he does not see as necessary.

Beavers can be highly profitable, long-time, repeat customers, so you will want to cultivate and maintain your relationship. Beavers are extremely busy, so you will need to be persistent in getting their attention. Be careful to propose changes that fall within the boundaries of the Beaver's current vision. Only propose significant changes if a response to a specific environmental force is warranted.

5. The Mule

The Mule is reluctant to change. The Mule may have slightly more anxieties than the Chameleon, but like the Chameleon, the Mule is not driven by anxiety. Unlike the Chameleon, however, the Mule is naturally uncomfortable with change. The Mule has low tolerance for risk, and if she perceives a change as a threat to her safety, the Mule may vehemently resist that change.

While Mules are reluctant to change, they do not refuse to change. Their change response is limited to only the strongest forces. They cope with weaker forces through denial or de-valuation. This leaves you with two choices:

- 1) Suggest only the smallest of change to Mules.
- 2) Suggest changes that respond to only the most powerful of forces.

6. The Turtle

The Turtle is the other neurotic change type. The Turtle is plagued by anxieties, perhaps second only to those of the Chicken. Whereas the Chicken copes with anxieties by occupying himself with activities, the Turtle's coping mechanism is to withdraw into his shell, close himself off from the reality of the world, and form his own reality inside his shell. He is close-minded, fiercely resists change and refuses to acknowledge the changes occurring all around him.

Avoid the Turtle.